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The Greatest of These"

ROBERT O. LAWTON

"THE GREATEST OF THESE"

A BOOK OF FIVE TO TWENTY MINUTE ESSAYS

BY

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BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1913

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TO
THE THREE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN
OF THE SPIRIT I HAVE EVER KNOWN
MY WIFE—MY MOTHER—MY SISTER
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

The readers of *The Christian Advocate* (the general organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South) and the *Southern Christian Advocate* (the official organ of South Carolina Methodism) will recognize practically the entire contents of this volume as having appeared from time to time in these excellent religious periodicals. This volume is published with the high hope that it may be helpful to my old and my new readers.

R. O. Lawton.

Lander College,
Greenwood, South Carolina.

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I

"THE GREATEST OF THESE"

Love is life and life is love. Where there is no love there is no life. The loveless life is the Godless life. Where love is, God is, for God is love. Love is the reflection of God, yea it is God Himself. Love is the highest and holiest manifestation of God, the sublimest expression of man. It is impossible to define love in exact terms. Love speaks a language of its own — the most beautiful language that the world has ever known — but it is a wordless language. And love refuses to be cramped into a few man-made words. The world today dreams of dollars and yearns quenchlessly for fame and reaches passionately after pleasure, but it is love above all else for which the world unconsciously hungers. Money and fame and pleasure may pass away with a passing day, but love lives for all time and all eternity. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; but love, secure in her existence, abides amid the war of

elements, the wreck of matter, the crash of worlds, and the flight of time. Long after the form is bent and long after the brow is wrinkled and the hair is gray, love will cast its shaft of light and spread its halo of beauty. The years come and go, only to make more mellow and render more beautiful the form of love.

Love is no respecter of persons. It dwells in the hearts of peasants and plebeians as well as in the lives of kings and queens. Like the rainbow, it arches up to meet the God of love, and also reaches its arms down until earth is touched. Love is a world-old aeolian harp upon which the Great Musician strikes divine harmonies that float melodiously over a world of great hurts and infinite pain. Love is a celestially fashioned canvas upon which the Master Painter of the universe splashes such Godlike forms and hues that the world bows its head and wonders awestruck and entranced. The songs of love are the sweetest songs that have ever fallen upon the ears of men. A little child wrapping its arms tenderly, passionately, about its mother's neck, and saying, *Mama, I love you!* counts more in the lives of tired and toil worn men and women than angel visits. Men have spent their lives carving exquisite forms out of stone, some of which have lived for thousands of years, but love can carve in the

human heart an angel form, which will live throughout the aeons and cycles of eternity. We cannot all paint great pictures and carve enduring sculptures, and write beautiful poems, but all of us — if we will — can so love that we shall produce the stuff out of which paintings and sculptures and poetry and dreams are made. Love suffereth long and is kind. It sweetens natures and purifies hearts and renders as spotless as lilies of the field the souls of sin soiled men. It is the stateliest lily in the garden of the soul. Love is greater than faith because it comprehends and even creates faith. If we have love enough, we will keep all of the commandments, for love will restrain us in our wrong doing and inspire us in our right doing. If we love God, we will not wound Him; if we love man we will not harm him. The commandments are formed upon our relationship to God and man. Hence love is the fulfilling of the law.

In the last analysis, nothing short of love will cast out of our lives selfishness and sin and ignoble traits, for God is love, and God alone can save us from ourselves and our sin. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The intellect must be the handmaid of the heart, else the house is built upon sand, and the storms of life will sweep it away. It is great to be powerful

in intellect, but infinitely greater to be grand in soul, and one cannot be grand in soul unless one loves much. When the heart life is cramped and warped and shrunken and shrivelled by education, it were better that a mill stone be tied about the neck of education and that education be cast into the depths of the sea, for what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world of knowledge and lose his own soul? That education which fails to enlarge the borders of the heart and make more measureless the reaches of the soul, is essentially vicious, for it is merely the development and multiplication of the natural man. An educated devil is more potential for evil than a non-educated. The Church which fails to place the supreme emphasis upon love has lost sight of the chief attribute of Him who went about doing good. The home which is built on anything less than love may endure in a degree of peace and harmony as long as the sun shines and the kindly stars look down, but when the clouds cover the sun and the night is dark, the foundations of the home will be shaken and the building will fall.

The love-life is the great life. Mary Magdalene rose from an outcast on the streets, houseless by night, to such heights of spiritual excellence that the garments of her soul glis-

tened as the morning and the form of her heart was as an angel's form — because she loved much. St. John the Divine catching apocalyptic visions of the golden glories of the new Jerusalem is not so fascinating a figure as St. John the lover of his Lord. Paul the great caught up into the seventh heaven and beholding celestial realities too excellent for human speech is not so engaging a personality as St. Paul the writer of the 13th chapter of 1st Cor. In the final round up after life's fitful fever is over, I am thinking that it will not be a question of dollars or fame or high society or prestige or intellectuality or big city churches or any other creature, but the simple question of who loved much, for is not love life and is not love the fulfilling of the law, and is not love greater than all else, and is not God love? If perchance we have so loved and served and dreamed of good here that at the twilight hour a few into whose lives our love has entered as a beam of light may say, *Here dies one who loved much*, the world's greatest Lover has taught us to believe that in the house not made with hands, our souls shall awake and be satisfied. The greatest of these is love.

II

LARGEST SUCCESS

To receive all truth with intellectual hospitality; to cling ever to the beautiful and the true; to entertain as honored guests a few tall dreams from life's morning hours until eventide; to be known as one possessing sweetness of nature, purity of heart, and spotlessness of soul; to translate the great hurts and disappointments of life into terms of sympathy and tenderness; to tread softly through the green pastures of love and by the still waters of faith; to love the Master so much that he will become the ruling passion of our lives, the chief Guest in the palace of our souls; to lift our fallen comrades in gentle sympathy and in the spirit of a brother; to make life sweeter and more worth while for the weak, the tired, and those who have fallen by the way; to make more music on earth by touching the latent, hushed chords in the hearts of at least a few men and women who have grown bitter and callous in the storm and the stress of life; to trust our Father as little children and follow the Christ all the way, even into the shadows of life; to press forward each

day with high heart and undaunted spirit on and on and on into the measureless regions of larger life and into the shadowless realm of the soul; to refuse steadily to grow bitter, to whine, or to cry aloud when the Great Teacher leads us through the school of suffering, knowing that the languages we are learning will be the languages we shall speak as celestial citizens; to feel our hearts stirred and fired and our souls filled and thrilled by every messenger bearing greetings and tidings from the Divine Source of all good; to realize that he who fails to provide for his family should be included in the same category with infidels (nevertheless, making a *life* is greater than making a *living*); to run the race of life with infinite patience, leaning upon God for results; to walk with our feet on the ground and our heads among the stars; to strain every nerve of heart and soul to see the invisible, to hear the inaudible and to feel the intangible, knowing that the real forces of life are the majestic entities that lie back of the visible, the audible, and the tangible; to thrill with divine ecstasy over the messages of the great masters in music, art, and literature; and, finally, to fashion our lives and our work after the similitude of the master Life and the master Artist — this is the largest success.

III

WHAT IS RELIGION?

To believe vitally in self and man and God; to see something good and true and beautiful in God's manifold creations; to think kindly and charitably of those who sin and fall; to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep; to believe in Jesus Christ as a *personal* Saviour; to think often of him and accord him a full measure of spiritual hospitality; to greet the world of tired men and toiling women with a smile, which is the child of love; to refuse to whine or grow bitter or encourage cynicism and doubt because God is in his heaven and on his earth; to extend to men of other creeds and other Churches the right hand of fellowship in the name of him who condemns narrowness and refuses to tolerate bigotry; to yearn after and pray for righteousness in order that we may clothe the spiritually naked with this beautiful garment; to regard our greatest hurts and deepest sorrows in the light of blessed schools through which God leads us to teach us the language of sympathy

and love; to believe in our fellow men so strongly that they will begin to believe in themselves and in God; to see God in the blue sky, in the shining stars, in the forms and hues of mountains, in the plenteous grace of ocean tides, and in the life of man; to so love the Master that he shall become the ruling passion in our lives, the chief Guest in the palace of our hearts; to place the supreme emphasis upon soul power and not upon mentality, for it is better to be grand in soul than powerful in intellect; to believe that he who feeds the ravens and watches the sparrow when it falls will likewise give his angels charge concerning us and keep us beneath the shadow of his wing; to use freely and fully all outward means of grace and paraphernalia of creeds, but value more a beautiful fellowship with God and a splendid service rendered to man than Churchism and ecclesiasticism; to refuse steadfastly to live alone and out of sympathy and contact with the world, but rather dream great dreams of the brotherhood of all men and so project ourselves into other lives that they will be enriched by our presence; to strive mightily to be what God would have us be, to do what God would have us do, and to go where God would have us go; to forget the things which are behind, and, reaching after the things which are before,

press forward day after day for the prize of the race and the reward of it all; to run with patience the race that is set before us, remembering the celestial witnesses, and looking unto our Lord, in whose strength we run and by whose grace we live and move and have our being; to look for the vision beatific when we must stand on our isles of Patmos and refuse to dwell upon our isolation and exile and undesirable lot in life; to throw ourselves at eventide on the bosom of our Father and believe as a little child that he will give us a resting place in our Father's house — this is religion.

IV

PAUL'S SOUL POWER

Paul's soul power is his greatest asset. In this he easily outranks all other men who have ever lived except, of course, the Man of Galilee. By soul power I mean a certain spiritual hospitality, a certain opening of the upper windows of the soul to divine impressions, a genius for godliness, a passionate and quenchless thirst after righteousness, a full-orbed surrender of all talents, possessions, and possibilities to God, a splendid abandon of spirit resulting in a quickening of the higher nature, and a more radiant immediate spiritual environment. This fine flavor of soul casts a halo about the form of a man and pervades the whole realm in which he operates. We might call soul power the highest expression of religious life, its choicest, rarest, and richest fruits. We might call it corporate consciousness, divinely inspired altruism, Christlikeness.

We may illustrate it best in the life of Paul, the great — great not in any single sense that the world calls great, but great in that he so

opened himself to God, so emptied himself for God that he walked the earth with more of God in him than any other man since time began. And is not this true greatness? God is all-great, all-good, all-powerful. Our talents, our possessions, our merit are from God. As we partake of the nature of God, we become of value in life. He who is imbued with more of God's spirit and attributes than another becomes logically greater than the other. Faith, love, hope, gentleness, goodness, purity, virtue, knowledge, kindness, long-suffering, sympathy, godlikeness — these are the things that make men truly great. And it is not, as many believe, money, fame, beauty, blood, prestige, worldly power, high society.

In proportion as men tap the reservoir of God's power they become powerful. In proportion as men connect themselves with the resources of the unseen, they become resourceful. In proportion as men develop within themselves, by divine aid, the attributes of God, they become like him. And as they become more and more like him they become greater and yet more great. And this is soul power. Paul transcended the utmost bounds of human achievement along this particular line. Paul's faith was not his, but "the faith of the Son of God." Paul's love was not his, but the love of Christ,

which constrained him. Paul's goodness was not his, but the goodness of his Lord, which wrapped itself as a rare and beautiful garment about his form. Paul's life was the street car; God was the power house. Paul's life was Niagara; God was the Great Lakes back of Niagara. He was filled with all of the fullness of God. He was stirred by the tides of God's love. He was fired with the passions of God. He was thrilled with the thoughts of God. For him to live was Christ. Into his life had swept the currents of the life of God. Paul was a new man; Saul of Tarsus was a dead man — there was no such man as Saul of Tarsus. With lavish prodigality and a certain divine abandon of self-surrender, he cast away every possible possession of Saul of Tarsus and threw himself empty-handed and empty-souled upon God and his mercy. As usual, God threw himself into Saul's life, and the result was Paul, the greatest man God ever made — greatest because of his ability to empty himself and be entirely filled with God, because of his passion for righteousness and thirst for holiness. This is soul power. Some have much, and some have little; Paul had most.

We try pitifully to be great of our own strength; we might as well whistle. We boast of our little virtues; they are dross in the sight

of God. In the last analysis there is none good but God, and logically it is only as God is in us that we approach goodness. Paul was the ambassador of God. Sometimes he was in chains, sometimes in prison; but he carried on his person and in his soul not only the marks of his Lord, but the credentials of heaven. God spoke through Paul. God worked through Paul. God lived in Paul. Paul's spirit was the candle of the Lord — and how far that candle threw its beams! Paul was a flame of fire, and about this fire was a celestial glow. Men saw God in Paul's face, for his face was as radiant as the morning with the light of God upon it. Men knew that Paul had been with Jesus, for the marks of his Lord were upon him. Paul did not write the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians; God wrote that marvelous thing of beauty, that priceless possession of the human race, epic in its sweep, lyric in conception, idyllic in expression, and gorgeous in its wealth of wondrously blended words.

This thing of soul power is the greatest thing in life, because it comprehends all that is best, and, again, because it has its orgin in the unseen realms of life. It is the enduring quality of art, the living element in literature, the eternal note in music, the immortal characteristic of man. Poets may write exquisite poetry, but

without soul power it will not live for all time. Painters may paint transcendently beautiful pictures, but without soul power they will not grip the universal heart and hold it. Musicians may build beautiful the palace of music, but without soul power it will crumble and fall. Men may carve out of their lives angel forms, but without soul power they will not rise as high as the stars. This is the dominant note, the great message of Paul's life. Over the gulf of the vanished centuries comes this vast message to our age, to us in these modern days who are too full of life's passing treasures to let God into our lives, too rich in the world's goods to clothe ourselves in the livery of heaven, too charmed with the glare and the glitter of materialism and artificiality to accord to God the proper degree of spiritual hospitality. Is not the message of Paul the message we need?

V

SERVICE

To refrain from innocent pleasures because perchance they may cause a weaker one to stumble and fall; to rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep; to enter lives more unfortunate than ours like a shaft of light; to catch the outlines of the vision splendid and impart it to those who are under the binding and blinding and grinding influences of sin; to dream a few high dreams and project into practical fashion the substance of such dreams; to reach arms of sympathy and love out into the mists and fogs of life and lift the fallen unto the heights where the sky is clear; to lie down in the quiet of the night and yearn passionately and quenchlessly for the souls of our brother men at home and across the wide seas; to enlarge the borders of our hearts and widen the confines of our souls by according to all men the privilege of fellowship and communion; to lead in childlike faith at least a few of the world's pariahs unto the great altar stairs of life which slope through darkness up

to God; to keep our natures sweet, our hearts pure, and our souls unspotted from the world in order that those who touch our lives may go away refreshed in spirit and whitened in soul; to make some conscious sacrifices and experience some great hurts because, forsooth, we would identify ourselves with all of the segments in the vast circle of humanity; to reach up through the night and beyond the stars for God's great, strong hand and to help others feel the touch of that hand and its uplifting power; to cast aside, as a useless but treasured garment, our little fads and hobbies and idiosyncrasies that men in need may not shun us and thereby lose contact with our better selves; to think less of our own rights and more of the needs of our brother men; to follow the Master all the way, even unto the twilight hour, that he may lead us and all who walk with us the dim-lit paths of life into the city not made with hands — this is service.

VI

OUR CANARY BIRD

We have a little canary which, I suppose, is no more attractive and winsome than your canary, but it is more so to us. I have noticed several things about our bird, and it is barely possible that you have noticed the same things about your bird. I want to tell you about these things and what lessons I have gotten from them, for you know we may learn lessons from the most insignificant creation of God, provided we keep our eyes and ears open and do a little honest thinking.

Our bird is pretty and attractive and winsome. This is not simply because it is our bird. Others have noted the same characteristics in this particular bird. He has a personality and he has individuality. He is not a lazy bird. He sings too much to be lazy and only a smart bird would take as much exercise as he takes. Then he is very appreciative. He shows his appreciation of any rare bit of food we secure for him by eating it as soon as we put it in his cage — and enjoying it. Then

again, this little bird is serviceable. With his good looks, his winning ways, and his rare powers of song he renders a real service in his little realm. And in spite of the fact that he spends his days in a cage and is denied the liberty and the freedom of the open air, he seems perfectly content with his lot in life. He begins the day with a song and at twilight he ends the day with a song, and this whether the day is bright or whether the day is dark. When night comes our little bird closes his eyes and sleeps peacefully until morning, unafraid of the darkness of night.

It seems to me that we might better our lives and render others happier and brighter by taking thought of these things, some of them anyway. Of course, all of us cannot be pretty and attractive and winsome and possess personality and individuality. These things are generally given to us, not acquired or developed. But all of us may be smart and ambitious. By smartness I do not mean intellectuality, but rather responsiveness to labor, a disposition to work, a reasonable amount of fingertipness. There is something wrong, radically wrong, with the man who despises work and longs for permanent retirement. Energy is force. Laziness is a curse. Lethargy may mean stagnation. Thrift is an essential in success. Work is the measure

of the man. Genius is sometimes an infinite capacity for hard work. A hopelessly lazy person should be examined for hook worms. The world has no place for a drone, and I am thinking that a drone would experience difficulty in finding a suitable location in heaven. It is just a little funny to hear the man who toils with his hands berate the man who toils with his head (sitting down, generally) for being so lazy, and equally funny to hear the man who toils with his head disparage the work of the man who toils with his hands. They are both honorable and blessed in the sight of God, and a joy may be found in any sort of toil if we regard our work not in the light of a curse and a misfortune but rather as a privilege and a panacea. As I have watched our little canary's energy and vitality and thrift, I have thought that God does not want any of His manifold creations to rust unburnished, to stagnate in idleness, to bury the talents He has so bountifully bestowed.

And all of us may be appreciative. Ingratitude begets pain. Appreciation is a godlike quality. Thanksgiving is a Christian grace. The thankless child makes an unhappy parent. Service is sweetened when appreciation is expressed. When we take the goodness and kindness of our friend or loved one for

granted, as a mere matter of course, the zest and relish of the kindness are largely lost. The child who accepts his Christmas presents, whether many or few, valuable or simple, in a burnt out, careless, indifferent, and unappreciative way (as you and I have seen more than once) presents himself as a puerile abnormality, a youthful monstrosity, or a fit subject for chastisement. The most attractive quality about a dog is appreciation. Too often we accept God's goodness and kindness and consideration without even thanking Him. We do not thank Him enough in our prayers — we are too busy asking Him for more gifts for which we also fail to render thanks to the Giver of all good things. As I have watched the expressed appreciation of our little bird, I have thought that God meant all of His creations to be grateful for the good things of life and to express in some way this spirit of gratitude.

All of us may render some service meet for the Master's use. We may not be able to carve a beautiful sculpture or to write a great poem, or paint a picture that will live for all time, or lead an army into victory; but all of us can touch at least a few hearts to finer issues and move a few souls to loftier purposes. We may not be able to sing in such fashion that men will listen with bowed heads, or preach with such

power that multitudes will listen spellbound to the eloquent words that fall from our lips, or teach with such wisdom and power as did Socrates; but we can so live and so love and so serve in our own way and with our limited power that at least a few of the sons and daughters of men will sing and preach and teach in finer fashion because we swept into their lives like the sound of music by night. After all, the tired men and toiling women and gentle children of the world do not need so much of genius and greatness, but rather more light, more love, more service — the things we can give them. We may render a high service by living a beautiful life and like a silent shaft of light enter other lives. We may enrich other lives by making out of our own life a poem, the music of which shall enter them like music from some new-found aeolian harp. We may serve beautifully by praying earnestly and faithfully for those we call friend — and others. We may lift some lives by simply believing in them. That is all some people need in this world — somebody to believe in them in order that they may believe in themselves and in God. And then we may serve others by simply being bright and cheerful and optimistic, by bringing into their lives gladness and joy and the radiant things of life — even as the little canary (which

is causing all this writing) sings its simple, glad songs on dark days as well as on bright days and thereby renders its service and fulfills God's dream back of its life.

We said this little bird is content with its lot in life, and I am thinking that we may learn a valuable lesson at this point. We so often fume and fret and chafe under our burden — and sometimes our burdens are imaginary burdens, bridges crossed too soon, abnormal sensitiveness, unmanly suspicious, etc. It is hard to please some of us. We are never content with our lot in life. We would change it. Far off cattle have long horns. We are jealous of our more fortunate fellows. We wonder why others have been given so much more than has been given us, why they are so much happier. We so often forget that the issues of life are from within. We fail to realize that our lot, our life, our destiny are largely wrought out by our own hands. And we miss the prize and the solution of life by failing to let God into partnership with us, which insures contentment, and gain, and peace, and victory. How splendid to be like:

"The Catholic man who hath mightily won
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain
And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain."

It seems to me that it is a reflection upon our Father in heaven for His children to complain continually about their lot in life.

We said this little bird wakes with a song and closes the day with another. How many of us, think you, wake with a song and a lilt in our hearts? It is so easy to wake in a bad humor — and again it is almost as easy to form the habit of beginning the day in good cheer and in gladness. It is one of the fine arts, which is worth cultivating both for ourselves and for those we call friend. Our bird sings a soft, rich, mellow song at twilight. It is his vesper song. The loud, gay, glad notes of the day are hushed into a plaintive, almost sad sweetness, and this is the best of all the songs he sings. And should not this be so with us? Our lives should pass out at eventide as a rich, soft, sweet song, after the heat and the burden and the midday glare of life's day. Our vesper songs should be our sweetest songs. As the tendrils that bind us to this life are weakened, the tendrils that bind us to the other life should be proportionately strengthened. Old age should be rich, and full, and beautiful, and mellow.

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be."

The world does not think straight on the old age question. Our old men should be our seers; we shelve them and supplant then with young men not half so wise, so worthy, so rich in eternal values.

From the western porch of life one looks at the golden glories of the sunken sun. From the western porch of life one catches fair gleams of the radiant light of the new Jerusalem. From the western porch of life one steps into the vestibule leading to the house not made with hands. From the western porch of life one reaches trembling hands and grasps the skirts of God. Let us listen with bowed head and chastened reverence and somewhat of child-like wonder to the even songs and sunset messages of those who stand upon the western porch of life — because their songs are sweeter, their messages are fraught with a richer meaning, and about their bowed and spent forms the garment of the Lord is wrapped, the halo of the Lord is gathered.

VII

HELL AND HEAVEN

To live from day to day in uncongenial surroundings and adverse circumstances; to yearn passionately for life's vast unattainable; to see our tallest dreams come back to us, flotsam and jetsam; to be misunderstood and reviled when we lavish our soul treasures upon the unappreciative and the faultfinding; to look eagerly across the gray mists of life into the shining stars for something that will satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst of our souls, and find it not; to feel the tidal waves of action and the quenchless passion of service striving passionately within a soul whose dwelling place is a fragile body and a complex bundle of nerves; to feel the clutch of Satan in a besetting sin and contemplate with infinite remorse his weird, wild-eyed, grim, gruesome, fiendish triumph; to see the cords of habit bind tighter and tighter the freedom of our souls and cry aloud for help, nor find it anywhere; to follow the great Captain into the dark, and, losing, find only black night and piteous unrest of soul; to lie

down at night with a guilty conscience and a soul that has been soiled in the dust of the world; to misspend a life pregnant with vast possibilities and rich in eternal values; to surrender our inner life, our holy of holies, to the vultures of selfishness, hate, anger, jealousy, malice, and murderous passions; to live throughout the cycles and æons of eternity in sight of the great white throne and the face of Christ, with infinite yearnings unanswered and a remorse of soul that surpasses physical torture; to reach with eager, outstretched hands after the unattainable on the celestial side of the gulf impassable; to cry as infants in the night, with no language but a cry, for surcease from pain, and hear only the gruesome, grotesque, hollow, phantasmagorical echoes and reverberations of the home of the lost; to remember with terrific force every evil act and recall with fearful vividness every lost opportunity; to be consumed and reconsumed and tortured and torn by passions and evil traits, intensified and magnified a thousandfold by the genius and environment of the place prepared for the devil and his angels; and to yearn piteously and quenchlessly for the touch of a hand and the sound of voices that were heard long since and lost forever — this is hell.

To live from day to day with those whom we

love and who love us in turn, bound together by common cords, kindredness of spirit, and goodly fellowship; to enjoy peace of mind, sweetness of nature, purity of heart, and spotlessness of soul; to be guided by our affections rather than by our passions; to dream a few great dreams, and, even though all do not come true, to believe with certainty that all things work together for good to us when our hearts are fixed on God; to wrap the arms of our hearts passionately about the shivering, cheerless, comfortless forms of our more unfortunate brother men and feel the reflex thrill and quiver of Christlike service; to see the form of God in the shining of the stars, in the arch of the rainbow, in the vastness of the moving tides, and in the common clod; to hear the voice of God in the song of birds, in the running of brooks, in the "Now I lay me" of a little child, and in the discords of sinful men; to feel the presence of God in the setting sun and the round ocean and the blue sky and the heart of man; to count that the sweetest music that was ever heard on sea or land, whose theme is the cross of Christ and his matchless gospel; to know Christ in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to accord to him the treasures of our souls; to count ourselves the guests of God, whether we are in the heart of a great city or in the soli-

tude of a desert or in the house not made with hands; to grow in grace with the passage of the days and in the knowledge of our Lord, approaching more and more unto the stature of perfect men and perfect women in Christ; to believe as a little child God's goodness and mercy and to trust him all the way, even into the shadows of life; to lie down to pleasant dreams at eventide and awake in our Father's house; to hold high and holy fellowship with the Master and the saints of old and those whom we have "loved long since and lost awhile;" to live under celestial influences throughout the ages of eternity, working and growing and learning and loving and approaching but never quite attaining unto the stature and character of God — this is heaven.

VIII

THE REWARD OF PREACHING

Great sacrifices are involved in preaching the gospel. A man must forego many of life's pleasures and even normal amusements. In reality, preachers are men of like passions and temptations with other men, and, as a matter of fact, they may be no better than other men, but they are at least expected to be better. They are chosen vessels of God, set apart to represent him to men, and in turn the world places a premium upon the preacher, requiring of him a life that is hid with Christ in God. It demands that he shall be filled with all of the fullness of God, and thereby rise above the sordid, the soulless, and the sinful. The very fact that he is set apart means isolation, abandonment, renunciation. He may be a human, social, and normal entity; he must be a man of God in a unique, distinct sense. And this very fact involves a certain subtle sacrifice, for in spite of the fact that he is bound to his people in a peculiar, spiritual fellowship, he is thereby separated from them as a human, normal fellow

being. This costs some men more than others. Some preachers delight in it, while others chafe under it. Preachers make great financial sacrifices to preach the gospel, and many of them toil incessantly, suffer infinite hardships, walk the *via dolorosa*, and renounce the thing their hearts hold most dear, and come out of the battle with scars on their forms.

These are just the beginnings of the true preacher's sacrifices. But in spite of, and sometimes by means of, the sacrifices and hardships and great hurts, the preacher's reward is exceedingly great beyond the power of words to express, indeed, transcendently greater than any other vocation. In proportion to the dignity and the responsibility of the work is the reward of it all. When a man catches the outlines of a vision vast and purposes in his heart to follow the great Captain even into the shadows and "beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars" of service and suffering and love and growth, walking in his footsteps and talking in his language and working after his fashion, then it is that his whole life is invested with a new meaning, and the world is no longer a charnel house filled with specters, but Godlike and his Father's. No man can walk with his head among the stars without feeling the influence of the stars. No man can fill his life with

a great passion without feeling the thrill of such a passion. No man can follow the great Captain without catching somewhat of the Spirit of the Captain. The preacher is God's good man. The preacher is God's ambassador to the courts of earth. The preacher is God's companion in his walks in the cool of the evening among the children of men. There are scars on his form which were received in the service of his Lord, but they are marks of his Lord, and in the city not made with hands his Lord will know him by his scars. There are great hurts in his heart, but out of his tears and great hurts the God of love is weaving a garment of transcendent beauty, the threads of which he cannot see now; but by and by in the city of God he shall see the garment in all of its beauty, and his soul shall be satisfied.

Amid the toils and the sacrifices, amid the pain of body and hurt of heart, amid the fearful loneliness and sorrow of soul, comes the voice of the Son of God like the voice of one who has caught the music of the world in one wondrous note and wafted it over a world of sorrow and suffering, saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." What care we for the sacrifices and the great hurts and the mockings

of men when the voice of the Galilean falls upon our ears like music from a harp of a thousand strings tuned by the fingers of God and played upon by the angels of God?

There come times in the preacher's life — it may be when with passion and power he is telling the old, old story of Jesus and his love, or it may be when with love like unto his Lord's he is sweeping into some life like a great northern light with the high theme of the gospel upon his lips, or it may be when in the high privilege of prayer he holds beautiful fellowship with his Lord — there come times when

"This earth we walk on seems not earth,
This light that strikes our eyeballs is not light,
This air that smites our forehead is not air,
But vision."

There come times when

"There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honors perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle."

There come times when we stand with the Master upon some mount of transfiguration and the countenance of our faces is changed, and the garments of our souls glisten and shine, and God's gentle voice floats down to us out of the

clouds, and we become a part of the angel choir of God, and we know that we know.

Preaching the gospel is the grandest work on earth. It pays better dividends than any other investment. The true preacher builds an abiding throne in countless human hearts, and he becomes a prince among men, and this through lowly service and Christlike ministrations and love which "takes up the harp of life and smites on all the chords with might, smites the chord of self, which, trembling, passes in music out of sight." We cannot all preach to great metropolitan churches, we cannot all hold high places in the eyes of the world, we cannot all preach great and noble sermons, but, according to the measure of ability that has been divinely vouchsafed to us, we can all serve and suffer and love and witness for our common Lord. And after we have toiled and wrought and served and suffered and reached the twilight hour, I am thinking that the great Rewarder of men will send his chariot, and when we arrive at the city not made with hands our Lord will lean over the golden bars of the New Jerusalem and lift us into the place he has prepared for us.

IX

THE PREACHER'S IDEAL

To be guided by love rather than by hate; to be possessed of sweetness of nature, purity of heart, and spotlessness of soul; to live such a life that all the world will take notice that we have been with Jesus; to dream a few dreams which shall never lose their freshness and reflexive power; to hold so high the torch of God's truth and mercy that wayfarers will not lose their way in the mist and the fog of life; to enmesh in the mystic web of love all whom we touch, and thereby bind them closer to the Man of Galilee; to forget our little malices and hatreds and jealousies against all men, and especially against our brethren in the ministry; to press forward day by day beyond the outer confines of yesterday's attainments, until finally we shall arrive at the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, as far as it is possible to be perfect in a world of manifold human limitations; to feed the flock of the great Shepherd with the bread of life, and lead them beside the still waters of love and through green pastures of

hope; to be stirred and fired by such a passion for souls that, in a beautiful abandon of spirit and forgetfulness of self, we shall lose our lives in the service of the Master of the vineyard; to be filled and thrilled with the consciousness of the power of the gospel of Christ unto the salvation of souls; to count it more worth while to be grand in soul than powerful in intellect, and yet to strive mightily after intellectual excellence; to sweep into at least a few lives like some great northern light with the high theme of the gospel upon our lips; to follow the Master all the way, even into the shadows of life, holding ever to the great truth that the servant is not above his Lord; to tell with passion and power the old, old story of Jesus and his love, and try diligently to live our sermons; to refrain steadily from unholy dreams of prestige and power and place, cherishing rather the high dream of lowly service and Christlike ministration; to wrap the arms of our hearts so passionately about the forms of those out of whose lives the light has gone and into whose lives the night has come, that a new light that never was on sea or land will break in upon their souls; to so touch the silent, dormant chords in callous, indifferent lives that angels and men shall pause and listen to the new note that swells the harmony of the universe; to love

little children and bring into their lives somewhat of the joy and light that radiated from Him who said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" to be pliable and flexible and self-effacing in matters of policy for the kingdom of heaven's sake, but to refuse courageously to compromise a principle; to preach Christ and him crucified or straightway leave the ministry; to make sure that Christ is the ruling passion of our lives, the chief Guest in the palace of our hearts, and let nothing, whether fortune, fame, or family, separate us from the love of Christ; and, finally, to dedicate, to consecrate our all upon the altar of the living God — this is the preacher's ideal.

X

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY AND THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

Viewing it from a material standpoint, wireless telegraphy is possibly the most remarkable conception of the present remarkable age, but it appeals to me as the tangible herald of a larger and richer and higher intangible message and reality. The wireless station registers external impressions and thereby becomes an inanimate receptive objective. We are intellectually, æsthetically, and spiritually animate receptive objectives, registering upon our receptive brain cells, upon the tablets of our hearts, and upon the scrolls of our souls external impressions of various natures. But it is not only this simple platitude that I am reaching after; it is a yet larger and richer conception. The material universe is a logical projection of an unseen force or entity, which we call God. Every cause must have an effect. Back of star shine and ocean tide and mountain glory must be a great first cause. Between this logical, tangible, material projection and this

unseen force there must, of necessity, be a bond of fellowship, a vital connection, golden chains of invisible links. Nature obeys blindly; man willingly or not at all. This spiritual entity, this vast leverage that we call first cause, is essentially not only greater than the audible, the visible, and the tangible, but is logically the greatest conception in the realm of the seen or the unseen. The veil separating the seen and the unseen is thin or thick, as we are delicately wrought spiritual instruments or fleshly screened obtuse receptive objectives. The borderland between the spiritual and the material is twilight zone or midnight darkness, as we have eyes to see and ears to hear, or have eyes and see not and ears and hear not. According to the evolutionary process of the development of the human race from an imperfect, obtuse, material substructure into a more perfect, complete, and spiritual superstructure, we conclude that the trend of progress and the march of evolution is from the material to the spiritual, from the tangible to the intangible, from the visible to the invisible. Men are supremely great, not because they can fight valiantly and accomplish marvelous physical feats, but rather because they are grand in soul, and they are grand in soul because they have connected themselves with this vast spiritual leverage that lies

back of the material, and therefore they project not themselves into the currents of life, but they project this supernatural entity in proportion as they have freely opened themselves as an objective. The greatest man, then, is the most receptive man, the man who is most teachable in the largest sense of the word.

Now, there is a certain material harmony of "things in general" on the lower planes of life, and there is a constant registering of these harmonies and impressions; but a higher, finer, grander harmony exists, the dominant note of which is spirit and the sound thereof celestial. This larger, richer harmony of "things in general" has to do primarily with the spiritual realm, and therefore is just beyond the wireless stations of our minds and souls, because our human instruments are not delicate enough to register the celestial voices, and the flesh so screens us that we cannot receive the divine impressions. Shakespeare says:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here we will sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
. . . Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Christ says: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." I take this to mean that we shall not only see him beyond the veil of which we have been speaking, when the fleshly screen is left behind and the soul looks with its own eyes, but that it is possible here to roll back the screen of the flesh and with the eyes of the soul to catch an outline of the vision of God. I take it to mean that we shall not only see him in nature and in the lives of our fellow men, but that we shall through purity of heart and spotlessness of soul transcend the utmost bounds of material entities and establish a visible bond of relationship between the invisible entity that lies back of the seen. A man with soul on fire with music touches the keys of a great pipe organ. Matchless melodies issue from the organ, and the building is transformed into a vast concord. Thousands of people are listening. Some hear only a rolling noise pleasing to the physical ear. Others are moved by the splendid technique and the execution of the master musician. Still others hear a deeper note of soul calling unto soul and soul answering unto soul. Some go a step farther and catch

a gleam or two of the soul of the composer. Others in a single royal leap are lifted into the land of dreams and catch a whiff of the broken dreams of the great composer, of the visions of his life, of the music that was in his soul crying passionately for expression, but could not be born on account of the screen of the flesh and the dampening influence of the world. But there are a few — only a few — who listen, and as they listen the pipe organ, the majestic building, the technique of the master musician, the soul of the composer, and the unutterable music of his soul, all are splendidly lost and swallowed up in the larger conception, in a richer melody, in a more wondrous symphony. They feel themselves a part of the vast choir invisible of the inarticulate world of inaudible music, and voices from the tideless seas of celestial sounds float in upon their souls, and they are borne afar, farther and farther into the mystic realms of the vast unseen, losing themselves finally in sight of the New Jerusalem, the great white throne, and the Father's face. They were perfect wireless stations, registering as receptive objectives the whole grand scheme of divine and celestial harmonies, and thereby transcending the utmost confines of time and space and place, pitching the tents of their souls "beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western

stars," of the tangible, the audible, and the visible.

I am thinking this is the gist of life, our chief business. We are divinely projected into this mundane relationship, and we are divinely expected not only to adjust ourselves harmoniously with our material and actual environment, but we are divinely expected to establish individual wireless telegraphic stations, which stations shall perfectly register inaudible and intangible spiritual messages and thereby become a vital part of the larger and higher harmony of celestial "things in general." In other words, there is a possibility of our walking with our feet on the ground and our heads among the stars. Why not? Is not our nature dual? Are we not of the race of God as well as of man? The souls of men have been cramped and twisted and warped too long. According to the evolutionary process, why cannot the unborn centuries to come establish a frictionless bond of fellowship between the souls of men and the Oversoul?

XI

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

The years and the centuries come and go, only to make clearer to the children of men the memory of the manger cradle and the marvelous Wonder of Galilee. Well may we, His followers, celebrate this most wonderful event in the history of the ages; for since the Christ came as a little child and wrapped his arms tenderly about the forms of little children, the world has bowed its head in sacred reverence to the glory of motherhood and the beauty of childhood. To-day a true mother's knee is the purest altar from which prayer ascends to the throne of God, and baby feet making melody in the human heart is the sweetest music that has ever lifted the broken lives of men and women to the heights immortal. In the light of the coming of Christ to a world of sin and darkness and sorrow, how beautiful, how inspiring is that immortal little prayer:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take!"

There are times when the voice of a little child following brokenly after its mother the words of that little prayer fills and thrills our souls with an inexplicable something that lifts us far above the life of the flesh into the shining tableland of the larger and higher life, into the measureless realms inhabited only by the soul and God. Since Christ was born of a woman, it is not the king on his throne, nor the warrior on fields of battle, nor the statesman in legislative halls, but the mother in the home who, under God, shapes the destiny of the nations.

In the beautiful legend of the angel's visit to earth three things were borne on angel wings back to the city not made with hands — a mother's love, the smile of a little child, and a beautiful flower. The smile faded on the way and the flower withered, but the mother's love faded not away nor yet did it wither. O Christ, in the divine abandon of thy matchless love and thy marvelous sacrifice, thou hast not only revealed the face of our Father who is in heaven and reconciled a lost world, but thou hast lifted womanhood out of the night and into the light, out of shame and infinite heartache into exquisite purity and largest life, and with thy pierced hand hast reached out into the fogs of superstition and sin and human weakness and saved unto thyself the little children of the world!

XII

THE CELESTIAL CITY

Mother, home, and heaven are the three words around which cluster the most sacred associations. They are invested with tender charm and idyllic sweetness. The idea of home fills and thrills us with higher ideals and larger purposes. The thought of mother sways the heart and enriches the whole of life. The contemplation of heaven begets within us more sweetness of nature, more holiness in living, more charity for man, more love for God. The thoughts of good men, though fastened upon the things of earth, wander toward the city not made with hands. The highest dreams of men find lodgment in the celestial city. Heaven is not a theme to exploit or to use as a medium in playing upon the emotions of people. Much violence has been done to this most sacred subject. A sermon or a harangue on heaven is always listened to, because the world knows so little about it and is so vitally interested in it that it would gladly hear more. We may allow our imagination to run riot and our fancy full play and

evolve some astonishing theories. But in the last analysis all we know about heaven is what the Bible teaches about heaven. And for some mysterious reason Christ taught far less concerning heaven than He did about earth and our life here. May not this be because He wants us to work out our destiny here by His help and trust Him to prepare and look after our welfare there? But in spite of the meager definite, detailed knowledge obtainable on this vital subject, there is a good deal that we know about heaven directly and indirectly.

We know that heaven is a place. Christ said so: "I go to prepare a place for you." We do not know where this place is. Christ, in speaking of it and in addressing His Father, led us to believe that it was above us, in the sky, far-off and cloud-wrapped. But that is very vague and uncertain. Where in the sky is heaven? No man knows, and no man need pretend that he knows, be he ever so wise, for he cannot know. It seems to have pleased God for us not to know. Some have believed and taught that heaven is only on earth, in good people and good places, but that is not only vague but dangerous and obviously erroneous doctrine. Others believe that heaven will be on earth after the world is destroyed, but that is a wild guess without fact or foundation.

Still others think that heaven will be located at special places on earth, such as Jerusalem, the garden of Eden, etc., which theory is likewise only a theory. We can only know that it is a place, but it is a place which Christ has prepared. Therefore heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Christ prepares it for the people whom He prepares for it, for none others are ready. A wedding garment must be worn in order to enter the celestial city, and this garment is woven for us by Christ.

We do not know in definite fashion the nature of this city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, but we know that it is transcendently beautiful beyond the power of words to express. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for His children in the inheritance to come. In gorgeous language and picturesque conceptions St. John the divine presents a picture of heaven as he caught apocalyptic visions from the Isle of Patmos. His picture has appealed most vitally to the heart of the world. We are finite and human. We are circumscribed by human and finite limitations. We rarely grasp realities in essence and spirit beyond the tangible and audible and visible. We need something tangible to steady us. St. John materialized heaven in ideal

fashion. In doing so he made a tremendous appeal to the human race, for men love gold and pearl and jasper and dazzling beauty. Some good Bible scholars declare that there are no such realities as golden streets, pearly gates, etc. They hold that a marvelous celestial vision was vouchsafed to John on Patmos of spiritual beauties and celestial realities too excellent for human language to utter. They argue that celestial conditions can be expressed only in celestial language, that human speech is hopelessly limited in describing such conditions, and that we can really form no conception of the spiritual glory and heavenly beauty of this city until we see it with the eyes of the soul and speak to its citizens with the voice of the spirit. But John caught this splendid vision and felt impelled to share it. The question was, how to impart the vision. He ransacked the vocabulary of the world for words big and beautiful and pregnant enough, and failing in his effort to express it, he made the city as beautiful and as gorgeous as he could, using language which could be understood by men and presented to men as lovely a picture of heaven as the human mind could desire. These commentators contend that heaven is not a material place, that no flesh and blood can enter there, that all is spiritual and enduring throughout the cycles and æons of

eternity. But matter and flesh do not abide changeless with the passage of the years. Hence this picture of John's is figurative, which does not mean that it is false, but rather symbolic of a rarer, larger, richer beauty which no man can describe. On the other hand, another school insists on the literal interpretation, and they believe that we shall some day walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and see the pearly gates of the celestial city, and lean over golden bars, and rest beneath the shade of kindly trees. But we cannot know definitely who is right. We simply know that heaven is a place of incomparable and inexplicable beauty and God has spared no pains in the preparation of such a place for those who love and serve the Lord.

We know that heaven is a place of high and holy and rich fellowship. We know that holy men of old who wrought and toiled and served and suffered for God will be there; we know that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany and Mary the mother of our Lord will be there; we know that the good people whom we have known in the flesh will be there; we know that the apostles will be there; we know that Christ will be there. We know that the followers of Christ will come up from the east and the west and the north and the south and sit down in heav-

enly places. This will be a select, though a tremendous, company. They will be the salt of the earth and the saved in heaven. The contemplation of such a host of kindred spirits elevates the soul, for we know that they all will be in one accord and in one place. We know that they will have a community of interests and a single purpose and a common ruling passion, which is the Lamb in the midst. All will be one great family. Christ will be the binding influence. There will be no jealousy there; there will be no envy there; there will be no strife there; there will be no sin there. The companionship of heaven will be one of its chief attractions. We who can form high and holy friendships here are made sad by the separations and partings of life. We would be with our friends more. We do not have the opportunity to cultivate enough friends. The limitations of earth are so narrow. But in heaven friendship will run riot and still be reasonable. Social distinctions will not separate us there as here: money will not be there to cause one citizen to look down on another: and the top-loftical ecclesiastic or high functionary who cannot afford to associate with unimportant folks here will either be on a common level there or will be there not at all, for the good Lord is not pleased with the foolishness of men. He has said so. We

sometimes long to see Shakespeare or Robert Lee or John Wesley or some other giant among the sons of men. But think of seeing Christ face to face, of looking into His eyes with the eyes of our soul, of hearing His voice call us by name and welcome us as a fellow heir into the place He has prepared for us! Heaven without Christ would be hell, for He is the light of the city and the life thereof. Think of meeting the apostle Paul, with the marks of his Lord upon him, and the privilige of hearing him tell about his work and sufferings and death for his Lord! I imagine most of us would look up Mary Magdalene as soon as possible and ask her to tell us all about how she rose from a woman of the street houseless by night to the sublimest heights of high and holy womanhood, and how it was that she was able to love so transcendently well. And I am thinking that several days would be well spent in listening to old Peter's triumphs and deep humiliations. And all who have ever loved beautifully will be eager to strike hands with the great apostle of love whom Christ loved as man. Heaven will be a place of high and holy and rich fellowship and sanctified friendships than which nothing is more delightful on earth or in heaven. This alone is worth all it costs to get there.

Heaven is a place of activity and service and

growth. Life there is not only ageless but continuous. Idleness has no place in the economy of God. In His plan nothing treads with idle feet. The drone in heaven is as much a monstrosity as the drone on earth. Heaven is a place of rest, but stagnation is not rest, and idleness is not rest. If heaven means sitting under shade trees eating milk and honey and playing on golden harps — and nothing else — some live, robust folks with red corpuscles would not greatly care to go to heaven. It is interesting to study the opinions of different people concerning the nature of heaven, its employments, etc. Generally, people think of heaven as a place where their unfulfilled earthly desires will be gratified *ad libitum*. For instance, the negro who has to work in the heat of Southern suns and often times suffer hunger, dreams of heaven as a place of shade trees and milk and honey in abundance. The tired house-wife, whose work is never done, dreams of a place of rest. To her nothing is sweeter than rest. She wants rest. She has heard much of heaven as a place of absolute bliss, but for her there can be no bliss where there is no rest. The Indian wants a happy hunting ground and a surfeit of the chase, and that is his dream of heaven. The Mohammedan looks for sensuous pleasures and beautiful maidens for

constant companions. The painter painting under terrestrial limitations, unable to put upon canvas the immortal children of his soul, dreams of four walls in the New Jerusalem where he may paint under celestial conditions the pictures which he could not paint on earth. The poet with the adverse influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil quenching his high songs and warping his fine spirit, yearns for a heavenly scroll and celestial measures and the Homers of heaven to appreciate his poetry. The musicians with souls on fire with inarticulate music dream of striking divine harmonies from the strings of heavenly harps. The lover whose beautiful dreams of consummated love returned to him flotsam and jetsam hopes to reach a far country across the mystic river where he will find the soul of his soul with whom he shall dwell forever and forever. But all of these are dreams. I believe some of them will be realized, and I believe some will not be realized. We may look for service and work and growth as a certainty. Nowhere does the Bible teach that heaven is stagnation and idleness and selfish ease. Christ has no patience with them who are at ease in Zion. Earth's experience prepares us for heaven's larger experience. The service we render here is symbolic of the larger service we shall render

there. Our growth in grace and knowledge and wisdom here argues a larger and a wider growth hereafter. We do not complete our education in the school of life. We enter at death into the university of the skies, and we grow and work and attain, learning new lessons of love, gleaning new truths about God, grasping fuller visions of Christ's sacrifice and mission and person, gradually approaching but never attaining unto the perfection and holiness of God. Heaven is no nursery for idlers, no flesh pots for gluttons, no display of precious gems for the gratification of gold-loving misers, but a place prepared by Christ for all who love and trust and serve Him here — a place of opportunity and peace and happiness and service and growth, a place good men and women will recognize as home and bad men and women would consider hell.

Heaven is a home without night, for there shall be no night there, without tears, for God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and with perpetual light, for Christ is the light of that home. This is certain. We may rest upon these promises: Heaven is home; heaven is full of light; there can be no night there; God will wipe away all tears. Earth has nothing like this to offer. Earth's treasures dazzle us, but earth is poor in eternal values. The desire

of home is strong in the human heart. Even a home on earth, which may be swept away in a moment of time, is sweet to us. It is symbolic of our home in heaven. The home idea of heaven is the strongest and most beautiful appeal it makes to the children of men. And it is a nightless home, and it is a tearless home. And God is the Father of the home, and none of His children shall suffer or weep or grow weary or endure great hurts. Men have renounced father and mother and sisters and brothers and houses and lands for such an inheritance. Men have lived in caves and endured infinite hardships for such a prize. Men have crossed rivers and seas of fire and climbed great mountains of difficulty for such a home. Men have turned their backs upon the glare and the glitter and the glory of the world, and followed the great Captain out into the night, for such a reward. The far country beckons us on and on and on, and its charm is ever fresh and fragant, and its gestures are ever beautiful and eloquent. We are not to serve God and man simply to get to heaven, but the fact that at eventide our Father will call His tired children home is a wonderful incentive to right living and fine deeds. I do not know that the streets are gold and the gates are pearl. I do not know just what the celestial citizens will

do and how they will do it. I do not know just where the heavenly home is. I do not know the details and the nature of this wonderful city. But I know that my Lord is there and I would be where He is forever and forever. I know that He is preparing a home for us, which fadeth not away. I know that if we trust Him and serve Him and give our life to Him here, He will receive us into that home. I know that there will be perfect peace and perfect happiness and perfect fellowship. I know that there shall be no night there and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes and we shall grow into the image of our Lord.

XIII

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

The instinct of immortality dates back to the gray dawn of history and thought. John Fiske says, " The idea of death is something impossible for the primitive mind to entertain," and Emerson says, " In the minds of all men, or wherever man appears, this belief appears with him, in the savage, savagely; in the pure, purely." The Egyptians believed in a future existence. Scholars have read inscriptions on monuments and writings on papyri written over forty centuries ago, and they testify to this belief. On one papyrus are these words, "His soul is living eternally." Zoroaster taught a general resurrection and a judgment day, and Homer, who lived nearly one thousand years before Christ, taught in that marvelous poem, " The Odyssey," that the future life is but a shadow of the present. Socrates, the most splendid human embodiment of the highest heathen civilization, who was born about five hundred years B. C., said: " But those who are found to have lived an eminently holy life, these are they who being freed and set

at large from these regions in the earth, as from a prison, arrive at the pure abode above . . . since our soul is certainly immortal." In one form or another, highly developed or imperfectly conceived, the idea of a future life has engaged the attention of all nations and peoples of earth. "Nations have been found without cities, without the arts and sciences, without the mechanical inventions or any of the refinements of civilized life, but a nation without the presentiment of the existence of a future state we shall search for in vain." How do we account for this, if we claim that there is no immortality of the soul? Can a universal idea be false? What is this if not the voice of God speaking in the souls of men? Cicero long since said: "In everything the consent of all nations is to be accounted the law of nature, and to resist is to resist the voice of God." A lie cannot perpetuate itself. Why then has the thought of ageless life entered into the universal mind if it be but a lie? Universal ideas are essentially founded upon truth. Error is sectional; truth universal.

"If then all men, both good and bad, do teach
With general voice, that souls can never die,
'Tis not man's flattering gloss, but nature's speech,
Which, like God's oracles, can never lie."

This belief is not the fruit of education, but rather intuitive, instinctive knowledge. We do not find instincts falsified in the plan of nature. Instinct teaches a bird to wing its flight across the seas in quest of a milder clime. Why should not the instinct of the soul be even superior to physical impulses? All of the other instincts in man are provided for, therefore why should the reaches of the soul be despised by the Creator, or Over-soul? These noble lines of Addison's bear quoting in this connection:

"It must be so. Plato, thou reasonest well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire;
This longing after immortality!
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,
'Tis heaven itself that points out a hereafter
And intimates eternity to man."

An atheist requested on his death-bed to be buried by the side of his Christian wife and daughter. When asked why, he replied: "If there be a resurrection of the righteous, they will get me up somehow or other and take me with them."

Man's restless spirit is a proof of his immortality. Wealth can not satisfy the soul. Said

a man to Rothschild, "You must be a thoroughly happy man." Said he: "Happy? Me happy? Happy, when just as I am going out to dine a man sends me a note saying, 'If you don't send me five hundred pounds before to-morrow night I will blow your brains out.' Me happy?"

Wm. H. Vanderbilt was so annoyed because he and Robert Garret could not come to an agreement that he fell to the floor and died in a fit of apoplexy.

From the dying bed of Queen Elizabeth comes the cry, "Millions of money for an inch of time."

Fame cannot satisfy the soul. Charles Lamb enjoyed the applause of men, but says he, "I walk up and down thinking I am happy, but feeling I am not." Was Samuel Johnson happy? "No; I am afraid I shall some day go crazy." The famous Edmund Burke was the author of this sentence: "I doubt whether in these hard times I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame in the world."

After a dozen successful campaigns and laying half of Europe under his feet, Napoleon was still unsatisfied, and in his ambitions to conquer the world he lost all and was banished to St. Helena, a broken-hearted man. When Alexander had conquered the known world, he

was not satisfied, but wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Cyrus, the conqueror, wrote this pathetic epitaph for his monument: "I am Cyrus. I occupied the Persian empire. I was king over Asia. Begrudge me not this monument."

Learning cannot satisfy the soul. When Archimedes discovered the mode of determining the relative quantities of gold and silver in Hiero's crown, through sheer ecstasy he leaped from the bath and ran naked through the streets of Syracuse, shouting, "I have found it!" But this ecstasy soon died away and he pressed forward in search of new truth. Newton said: "I feel like a little child amusing itself, finding here a smooth pebble and there a brilliant shell, while the great ocean of truth lies unexplored before me." Why is it the world cannot quench the thirst of man or satisfy his restless spirit? Is it not that man was made for that which the world cannot give? St. Augustine says: "The soul of man was made for God, therefore it can never rest until it rests in Him alone."

This is the chief dignity of man, that none or all of the things which pass away with the tide of years can really satisfy him. The soul is godlike, therefore its thirst can only be quenched in the springs of eternity. The immortality of the soul is not a wild dream nor yet

a cunningly devised fable. It is really the only substantial thing in life or death. Art perishes, architecture crumbles away, literature is mutable, knowledge shall vanish away, the treasures of earth are corrupted by moth and rust; the soul alone lives throughout the cycles of time.

"The soul, secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger and defies its pain.
The stars may fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;
But she shall flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

Were there no immortality of the soul, life would indeed be full of inequalities, of meaningless dreams, of hopeless ideals, and of a certain harshness of divine government, which would prove fearfully discouraging to human effort, to high hoping, to beautiful dreaming, and to the ceaseless following of a high ideal "in spite of the stare of the wise and the world's derision." To man, with his broken dreams and unrealized ideals, the thought of heaven as a realization of his ideals and a consummation of his dreams is a splendid conception and a rare inspiration. All that we dreamed of being here, but could not be because of the "twist and cross" of things, we shall be in the ageless life; all of the rare deeds of love that we would do here, but

could not quite accomplish because of the myriad quenching voices of the world, we shall do on the other side — this is a thought to call forth the very best and biggest in us. Even after we have wrought well here, and toiled as men fashioned after God's likeness, and done many fine things in life's great workshop, still our lives are wofully incomplete and hopelessly imperfect — in spite of the doctrines of extreme holiness. Shall we not have another chance under more auspicious circumstances? I do not mean a chance to repent of our sins and thereby escape hell, but a place where the soul shall speak in its own language and have full play to enlarge her borders by a frictionless fellowship with the Over-soul. Henry Ward Beecher said:

"I am like a man that takes the first canvas to paint a picture. He does not know what he will do. He lays in forms in all sorts of ways without coming to any satisfactory result. At last he says, 'I cannot make anything of that picture, but I have a conception. Bring me a fresh canvas, and I will try again, when I think I shall have better success.' I have long been trying to paint true life, and have only partially succeeded; but if God will give me another canvas I think I can paint better, and He will."

Said Victor Hugo, the author of one of the greatest novels ever written:

"For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song — I have tried all. But I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave, I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work;' I cannot say, 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes in the twilight to open with the dawn. My work is only beginning. My monument is hardly above its foundation. I would be glad to see it mounting and mounting forever. The thirst for the infinite proves infinity."

Browning's "Andrea del Sarto," the flawless painter, who had failed here for lack of soul-power, asked for one more chance to try his brush under new conditions upon one of the four walls of the New Jerusalem. Who shall say it was not a splendid request? That very request proved that he had soul-power, even though he could not quite reach the goal here.

But the man who has risen with Christ from the old life into the new does not need these or any other proof of ageless life. Why? Because he *knows* and he *knows* that he knows. A child wraps its arms about its mother's neck and says, "Mamma, I love you." Philosophers and scientists and cynics and rationalists might

argue until they were green in the face, but they could never persuade that mother that she did not love the little child. How does she know? She *knows* that she *knows*. That were an idle question. Likewise, the man who has been born into the wondrous life of the soul through the mystic power of the operation of the Holy Spirit *knows* that he *knows*. The Christian knows that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

XIV

EASTLAKE PARK

Eastlake Park appeals to me peculiarly. In many respects it is one of the most beautiful things in the city of Los Angeles, but it is a beauty that appeals to the inner eye. I love to go there just before sunset and stay until the stars come out. This is the best time because at that hour there are very few people around and, again, because a soft stillness is in the air, a blessed calm pervades all things, the world around is hushed into silence, and the garment of peace is wrapped about the form of things. As I sit by the lake my heart is strangely warmed by a mystical sense of the beautiful bond that connects all created things into a certain oneness of fellowship, made fast by the golden chain of divine love and Fatherhood. In front is the beautiful lake, calm and peaceful, save now and then a ripple created by the noiseless swimming of a stately swan. Upon the lake is reflected in brilliant colors the golden glory of the setting sun. In the distance are the " everlasting hills " silhouetted against the evening

sky. On either side and to the rear are luxuriant trees and shrubbery and a profusion of exquisite flowers. After a while the stars come out, one by one, silent messengers from God to the children of men. A swan swims out of a rather muddy, isolated side issue of a lake with its milk white feathers somewhat soiled by the mud, but when it reaches the main body of water its feathers are once more spotless, and with stately bearing it swims out upon the lake and on into the gathering darkness. As it passes out of sight the thought comes to me that though we get our garments soiled in the mud and scum of life's inland sea, at eventide when we launch out upon the boundless ocean of eternity our garments shall once more become spotless. From this entrancing experience I come back to the din and the noise and the glare and the glitter of the city, with its vast throng of hurrying, rushing, sinning, and soiled men and women, and while it is almost like coming down from a transfiguration mountain experience into the valley below, still I realize that there is a value attached to men and women in sin and soil transcendently greater than that of the combined brotherhood of lake and swan and tree, starshine and sunset and mountain glory, because of the divine superscription written immortally upon the soul of man.

XV

THE IDEALIST

Emerson hitched his wagon to a star. He was a man of ideals — and he was a man of action. Before Shakespeare could write his plays, which are among the marvels of the world, he must needs allow his immortal characters to flit through his imagination. Milton dreamed of " Paradise Lost " before the world read it in wonder and amazement. Dante was in hell before the " Inferno " broke upon the world with such colossal effect. No supremely great man reaches the heights before he has dreamed of them. We are no greater than our ideals, and generally not as great. " A man's reach should exceed his grasp." Ideals are distant objects, far-off points, cloud-wrapped realities. Like a mirage, they vanish as we approach them, and reform farther in the distance. We should not attain unto our ultimate ideal. There would be no more worlds to conquer. We would rust unburnished, lapse into lethargy, stagnate. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Our ideals continually elude our grasp, but to-morrow we

are sure of reaching the goal. But suppose we never reach the mark, suppose the golden dream never comes true, what then? Are we not stronger, wiser, better for having dreamed and reached and followed the white ideal? The prize of life is often in the race, not the goal. Our realized ideals are not so sweet to us as the new-formed unattained ideals. The little child dreams of the time when he will be able to climb up on a table; then to ride a pony; then to shoot a gun; then to be a man and wear long pants; then to sprout a mustache; then to play the man in the world's work. And so it goes — from age to age we are fired with new ambitions, filled with new ideals, rising and falling and falling and rising, until finally nothing that this world holds will satisfy us; with St. Augustine, we would rest in God.

The value of an ideal is in its inspirational effect. We are swayed by our ideals. A conscientious man makes a desperate effort to live up to his ideals. A man of low ideals is a man of poor character. This is a logical conclusion, for as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Out of the heart are the issues of life. The dreamers of the world have been the world's favored children — Joseph, Moses, David, St. John, Paul, Francis Xavier, Milton, Browning, and a thousand others. The world holds nearest to its

heart the idealists of the world. It reserves the privilege of ridiculing them at times and at other times allowing them to live in a garret and almost beg for a living; nevertheless she loves them more than she loves her so-called practical men. But we should draw a sharp distinction between idealists proper and practical men proper. The greatest dreamers are they who do most of the world's work. They are seers. They catch visions. They dream dreams. They look years and even centuries ahead. And they do not stop here. They clinch their dreams. They execute their plans. They render to the world a man's work well done. This is the type of idealist which is engaging my attention, and not the impractical visionary and the ineffectual sky gazers. They are abnormalities in the eternal fitness of things. They are to be pitied; not admired and not canonized. Now, the intensely practical man, the man who prides himself on never dreaming a dream, never catching the outlines of a great vision, never indulging in a single lofty ideal, this man presents himself as one who sleeps. He sees about one inch beyond his nose, provided his is a short nose. He is wrapped up in realities. He never sees beyond the visible; he never hears beyond the audible; he never reaches beyond the tangible. He lauds to the

sky such practical men as Harriman, Morgan, etc., and regards with withering contempt such dreamers as Livingstone, Luther, and Savonarola, forgetting that all great achievements grow out of ideals and visions. The great captains of industry are dreamers before they are "practical men." Some men use their powers and their ideals to amass fortunes; some to conquer worlds; some to write books; and some to help the Master of men save the world by placing their lives at His disposal. But the root idea is the same. All are idealists. The difference is in the manifestation, in the expression of the ideal. I want to say in this connection that the typical visionary and the typical practical man are both failures. The world's heroes are men who dream dreams and see visions, and then bend their selfish ambitions into an expression of their best selves for the good of men and for the glory of God. Then failure may mean largest success, even as success in some men may mean failure. Sometimes a man must face certain defeat and failure in order to be true to the highest ideals. The world's greatest men and women have walked the *via dolorosa*. The way of the idealist is hard. But out of defeat and disappointment and shattered hopes and broken dreams may grow largest success, richest attainment, beautiful character, and eternal gain.

My thoughts are traveling toward the land that is called Holy and the Man of Galilee — the most marvelous dreamer the world has ever known and yet the most practical man the world has ever loved. The world lay before Him. He enjoyed all power on earth and in heaven. Men wanted Him for their king. How easy for Him to unite the whole world and establish a harmonious, homogeneous empire of righteousness! It seemed reasonable, good, natural. But He turned His back upon it all. He set His face toward defeat, toward humiliation, toward the cross, toward apparent loss and oblivion. His dreams seemed mockeries to His followers; His ideals ironies. They had *hoped* that He would deliver Israel, but it seemed as if it was only a dream, a dream too bright to last. And this dreamer had said that He would draw all men unto Him, that He would found a kingdom greater than that of Charlemagne or Napoleon or Alexander because their kingdoms were founded on force, while His would be founded on love. Small wonder that the cynics laughed, the heathen raged, the hypocrites rejoiced, the scorners mocked. Small wonder that His followers grew faint and lost hope and lapsed back into somewhat of their old life. But the dreamer rose and walked the earth and ascended into heaven — and to-day the nations of the earth

worship Him, and the islands of the sea reverence Him, and the kings of men call Him Lord. This world dreamer is world victor. In lesser degree, according to our talents, we shall conquer the world by dreaming beautiful dreams, by catching splendid visions, by cultivating lofty ideals, and by doing our utmost best to project into practical fashion these intangible, invisible children of the spirit.

XVI

OUR PRIVILEGE

We cannot always hear the bells of Easter morn or walk the shining heights of glorified manhood; we cannot always touch the seamless robe of Christ or think the thoughts of God; we cannot always do the Master's bidding in the hard school of life or find the altar stairs which slope through darkness up to God. But we can always strive to listen amid the din and the noise of life for the still, small voice of God; we can always throw our lives in childlike trust upon the bosom of God and lean on Him for results; we can always make some high effort to touch at least a few hearts to finer issues and move a few souls to loftier purposes; we can always follow the Master of men, even though sometimes our vision is dim and our step is faltering, and even though it seems at times that He is leading us out into the night; we can always hide ourselves beneath the shadow of His wing when the storms of life beat upon us and the tides of life sweep us from our mooring.

XVII

BOATS

As far back as I can remember I have been interested in boats. The toy boat engaged my most youthful attention, but since then other and larger boats and ships have made their appeal — and I never grow tired of a boat of any description. I have extracted peculiar pleasure from observing toy boats, fishing smacks, sailboats, ocean liners, and battle-ships — and my interest in submarines and airships is strong. These boats appeal to me as boats — and again as symbols or ideals, parables or allegories. Somehow they are representative, or at least very suggestive, of the Christian life of various types of people.

1. The toy-boat Christian is that individual whom the devil can treat as a toy and lead around with a string, even as a small boy pulls his little boat on a pond with a string attached. It is strange and sad to observe that this class of Christians exists even among preachers, who allow themselves to be treated as toys and led about by popular applause, fame, money, fear of sacrificing their Conference record by preaching the truth to a few godless but power-

ful members of their churches, an unholy ambition. In Sam Jones's picturesque phraseology this class of apparently well-meaning folks won't be in hell ten minutes before the devil will have them bridled and saddled and riding them all over hell.

2. Fishing smacks are little boats used by fishermen on the coast. They are shallow-water boats, boats afraid to go out too far lest a squall come upon them suddenly and upset them. When they see a squall coming they pull for the shore. The churches are full of fishing-smack Christians. They refuse to venture out upon God's great ocean, preferring to remain in sight of the shore for fear they may perchance encounter a storm or a little danger. They miss the best and the biggest in life because they do not launch out into the deep. They forget that he who dares most for God gains most. He that loseth his life on God's ocean shall find a larger life in God's haven of rest. A shallow-water, shore-boat, fishing-smack Christian will never do much in the way of advancement and growth.

3. Where is the man, and especially the preacher, who has not seen sail-boat Christians? The sail-boat is dependent upon winds, affected vitally by storms, and subject to external conditions and circumstances. If the weather is

good and the sky is clear, the boat moves with perfect ease and a degree of velocity, but not so when the wind changes and things go wrong. Some Christians are mightily affected by the wind. Their religion on Monday is not quite up to the standard of Sunday because the wind has changed. They failed to get the office they craved, or a place on some committee, or perchance their "ideas" were not followed in the quarterly conference — and straightway the wind changes. An east wind springs up. Their sail-boat stands still on the waters. They no longer see their way clear to run on schedule time — at least until the pastor changes the wind. Then again storms have a way of beating against us in this old world which is so rough and so gentle, so ugly and so beautiful, so false and so true, so mean and so good. There are storms of adversity and defeat and sorrow and disappointment. Sail-boats are affected by storms. Like sail-boats, so many people are seemingly good Christians as long as the sun is shining and the sky is clear and no adversity has befallen them, but when they are beat upon and buffeted by a strong wind of defeat or struck by some mighty storm of sorrow, they are swept far out of their course and sometimes even wrecked upon the great ocean of life. Like the wife of Job, some very

good Christians are ready to curse God and die when they experience a great sorrow or disappointment. Our religion is not real and strong and abiding until we are ready to know Christ in the fellowship of His suffering as well as in the power of His resurrection.

4. Ocean liners are exceedingly interesting boats, because they confidently move out upon the ocean for a definite, distant point regardless of wind or wave, and go to that point, and again because the propelling power of the ship is out of sight. The ocean liner is not buffeted by winds or affected by ordinary storms. She sails on, because of the power that drives her. It is passing pleasant to remark the large number of ocean liners in the Church of God. They are steadfast, unmovable, unaffected by winds of afflictions and waves of criticism. They move toward something definite, and they attain. And the secret of it all is the fact that their lives are impelled by unseen forces — it is a question of the propulsive power of divine dynamics. After all, the unseen forces are the real forces of life — the great lakes back of Niagara, the power house back of the street car, the hand of God back of the lives of men. It is this which counts for most in our voyage over the chartless ocean of life.

5. Battle-ships are often more picturesque

than useful, but the ideal battle-ship lives a militant life and fights the battles of its country. The Church needs more battle-ships. The choir in the city churches, according to Billy Sunday, is the war department of the Church. But it is not that idea which is meant to be conveyed when we speak of battle-ship Christians. It is fighting God's battles, fighting the devil in high places and around the corner, fighting sin and not sinners. It is the Christian who puts on the whole armor of God and with the Son of God goes forth to war for God and for good. It is the man who is not afraid to stand by and with the right for Christ's and conscience's sake even though, like Athanasius of old, he stand alone against the world. The Church of God is an army and it should be a militant army whose ideal and work is to usher in the kingdom and reign of the Prince of Peace. A namby-pamby, wishy-washy, weak-kneed, half-hearted Christian cannot hasten the reign of righteousness on earth.

6. Submarine boats are quite suggestive. They have a way of going down beneath the surface and sounding the deeps. A surface Christian is of necessity shallow, lacking in great passions, and given to instability and inconsistencies. The deeps of life are the sources

and forces of life. So many of us are not willing to get down beneath the surface — in thought, in emotions, in experience, etc. It costs something. We pray for an outpouring of God's Spirit in revivals and a baptism of the Holy Ghost, but we are not willing to pay the price. Privilege means projection. Power means responsibility. Talent means service. God is wiser than men. He selects for divine baptisms men and women who are ready to go with Him down, down, down, until the nether springs of life are reached, until we stand upon the foundations of God. Then and only then are we in position to rise with Him as high as the stars. The world needs more submarine-boat Christians.

7. This is a day of airships. Man's skill and daring have invaded the regions above the earth. The airship idea is a beautiful conception. The ethereal is ever winsome in its appeal. The skies make us look up, and by looking up we sometimes see a hill or a star, whence come our help and inspiration. The airship is a scorner of the ground. It rises above the earth. It loses itself in the sky. The airship Christians are tall among the sons and daughters of men. We must stand on the heights at blessed intervals if we would enrich the valleys and plains

with the benediction of our lives. There are no fogs nor mists up there, and the sky is clear. From the heights we catch outlines of the vision of God. From the heights we hear the rustling of angel wings. From the heights we breathe the breath of God. People are prone to live too much on the earth. We are citizens of two worlds. Our lives are dual. We fail too often to nourish our souls, while we feed fat our bodies and train our minds. Materialism with its blighting, dampening, binding influences has gripped our country and our age. Where there is no vision the people perish. We must leave the ground, the earth, the sordid, the material, at intervals, and stand with God on some tall Transfiguration mountain, and hold high fellowship with Christ, and lose our lower lives in the higher life, and let the Son of God invest us with divine dignity, clothe us with celestial raiment, write upon our hearts and faces new messages, and breathe into our souls the breath of new life. Airship Christians get so much more out of life — and they give so much more to life. This does not mean that we must become hopeless dreamers, impractical visionaries, and star-gazing idealists. The second state of the man would be worse than the first. But even a fish has to rise to the surface at intervals

to catch a whiff of air — and how much more is a man than a fish! I am thinking that the soul would utterly perish did it not rise from the ground ever and anon and catch a whiff or so of celestial air.

XVIII

JOHN KEATS, THE APOSTLE OF BEAUTY

Byron, Shelley, and Keats are linked together in the golden chain of English poets stretching from Chaucer to Kipling. All died young. All wrote with passion and power and rare beauty. There was a note of sadness and solitude in the life of each. But here the comparison ends, for Byron and Shelley were revolutionists, looking into the dim-lit future for a better social state, while Keats caught splendid visions of the past and was satisfied to revel in a certain sheer poetic phrensy of delight. In "Sleep and Poetry" he exclaims:

> "O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
> Myself in poesy! So I may do the deed
> That my own soul has to itself decreed."

Then Byron and Shelley were aristocratically descended, while Keats was of humble origin, his father being a livery stable keeper. Limited in birth, limited in education, limited in health, limited in friends, limited in number and variety of poems, dying at twenty-five, he felt that his life was a failure, his work not worth while.

He desired that the following line should be engraved upon the stone erected to mark his resting place:

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

But the world has not accepted this verdict. On the contrary, Keats stands today in the foremost ranks of English poets, and the heart of the English-speaking race is strangely, tenderly, abidingly drawn to him. This meed of praise and tender love for Keats has grown out of the fact that he fought so finely against certain defeat, that he rose so handsomely above adverse conditions, that his death was so untimely, so tragic, such a loss, *such* a loss, to the world of poetry. But aside from this, Keats wrote in small compass some of the rarest, richest, most beautiful poetry that England ever produced. Much of his work was well-nigh faultless and perfect, and for sheer beauty of verse he has not been surpassed. Beauty with Keats was a passion, the ruling passion of his life. He held that

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

According to his somewhat narrow philosophy of life, "Beauty is truth, truth, beauty — that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Being possessed with such a passion for the beautiful, naturally his poetry is shot through with the element of beauty, so much so that, like Lanier, his poetry sometimes cloys with sheer beauty.

At sixteen Keats read "The Faerie Queen," and straightway a poet was born to the world. In the golden lines of Spenser's beautiful poem, he caught the outlines of a vision of his own poetry. When he read Chapman's "Translation of Homer," he was lost even as in a delicious dream, and he was fairly swept off his feet by the tides of a new music, a melodious force, that had never before touched his life. We, in our lesser passion for poetry and beauty and music, can form no adequate conception of this mystic influence upon Keats. He records his feelings in a magnificent sonnet:

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Keats wrote four exquisite odes unsurpassed for sheer beauty, marvelous melody, rich music, and noble expression in the whole vast sweep of the entrancing realm of poetry, viz: *To a Nightin-*

gale; On a Grecian Urn; To Psyche; On Melancholy.

I wish space would permit an extended quotation from each, but this being out of the question, we shall quote the seventh stanza of the "Ode to a Nightingale":

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

We have already alluded to the death of Keats at twenty-five, which was full of high tragedy, pathos, and untimeliness. He was just coming into his full-orbed birthright as a great poet. Considering his age, opportunities, environment, and the excellency of his poetry, his accomplishment was as great, if not greater, than any other English poet. We can only conjecture, with infinite regret, what exalted place would have been his in the high places of song. We know he felt the divine movement

and melodies of unsung songs crying passionately for utterance in his high soul, but because of his fragile body and early death these children of his soul were never born in this world — and we know how great the loss is to the world. But in our larger, rarer faith do we believe that those high dreams of unsung songs were wasted upon "the naked shingles of the world"? Do we believe that his work ended at twenty-five, with all his matchless talents and possibilities buried in oblivion? Surely our faith rises higher than this. It teaches us that the music that Beethoven composed, which no earthly instrument could play, will not be lost in the divine economy of the universe, and we believe he will be accorded the privilege of hearing the music of his soul on heavenly harps in the city not made with hands. God is good, and God is just, and God is all powerful. And God never suffers a talent to atrophy, if we do our part. Why could not, why should not, the great Rewarder of men bid some tall angel stretch a canvas on the walls of the New Jerusalem for Andrea del Sarto to paint the things that he could not quite attain unto here on account of the tangled skein of the world and the flesh? Is not the far country across the mystic river, of which we dream and preach, and for which we yearn quenchlessly, measureless

enough and kindly enough for John Keats to have room to write his unsung songs under celestial conditions without the limitations of this life? Whether or not all of us agree on this, the fact remains that our Father rewards us not as the world does, according to our actual productions, but as we have dreamed and hoped and aspired, as well as actually accomplished. And it is our belief that no tall dream falls to the ground; no splendid reach of the soul comes back to us flotsam and jetsam; no beautiful aspiration loses itself in the mists and the fogs of an unrewarding world. All that we *would* do is recorded in the city not made with hands, as well as all we do. Every high thought, every beautiful motive, every handsome intention, all are marked by the Watcher of men.

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good
shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good,
nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for
the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of our hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for
earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in
the sky,

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Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once; we shall hear it by and by."

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